

**THE WORKING MAN AND THE CHURCH.**

There is a great deal said by some writers and speakers about the antagonism of the laboring man and the Church. They say that he is drifting away from the Church, and that the Church is losing its influence over him.

One of the difficult questions involved is to decide just what is meant by "the laboring class." It is generally understood to mean those who make their living chiefly by the work of their hands, rather than by the use of their brains. But here no hard and fast lines can be drawn. The more brains a man puts into the work of his hands, the better workman he is, and usually the more successful he is.

Accepting this definition of the "laboring man," is it true that the Church and the religion of Jesus does not appeal to him? It is very true that there are a great many laboring men who are not attracted to the Church, and there are a great many over whom the Church seems to have very little influence. The same thing is true of professional and business men. There are a great many of the wealthy and especially of the leisure class who rarely ever darken the doors of the church. On Sunday they are found in the club, on the golf ground, automobiling in the country, or at home reading the Sunday newspaper. Lack of religion is not peculiar to any one class.

Is the laboring man not found in the church? There are some sections of the country with which we are not familiar, and for which we cannot speak, though we imagine that conditions are not so entirely different after all in different localities. We can speak on this subject for the South, and we are sure that we make no mistake when we say that there are more laboring people in the churches of this section of the country than there are of any or all other classes. There will scarcely be found a church anywhere in which there is not a large proportion of laboring men. There are many churches composed entirely of this class. Many a church in the country is made up almost entirely of the men who labor in the soil. In the city often times some of the largest churches are made up entirely of men, with their families, who, during the week soil their hands and their clothes in honest and honorable labor. These churches are just as marked for their spirituality and the sturdy worth of their character as are any others.

It is true that there are some churches that do not attract the laboring man. They may be in a different part of the city from that in which he lives; or it may be that he does not care to go to the church where the majority of the members dress better than he and his family can afford. Or there may be other differences, which make him feel that he would rather be with those with whom he associates daily, and this is very natural.

If we were to take out of our churches all the laboring men, and close up all of those churches which are made up entirely of laboring men, we would find that there would be many vacancies which it would be hard to fill.

The fact is that the Church does not make any distinction of classes. It is true that there are certain members of the Church who do not treat properly some others, who are also members. But this is not a practice of which any class has a monopoly. The Church and the vast majority of its members are earnestly and faithfully striving for the salvation of the souls of men.

The real trouble is that the two classes do

not understand each other. Those who, for want of a better name, we may call "the wealthy," sometimes wonder why the laboring man does not come to their costly church. He would not feel at home, if he did, and so the laboring man sometimes wonders why wealthy church people do not do certain things.

Where the laboring man, who is out of the Church, criticizes it, it is almost invariably because he does not appreciate the aim of the Church. And he does not draw the distinction between the Church and certain individual members, who fail to do just what he would like for them to do.

So far as we have heard or seen such criticisms, they are based on selfishness. There is a desire expressed that the Church shall do something to advance the material interests of the laboring classes. Sometimes it is demanded of the Church that it shall undertake to settle a strike. If the Church should do this and should feel that the laboring man in that case was wrong, and should take the other side of the question, the Church would undoubtedly lose his good will. Or he wants the Church to use its influence and power to secure better wages or better working conditions for him, better houses or better sanitation, and many other such claims upon the aid of the Church are made.

When our Saviour was on earth two men came to him with their dispute over property matters, and wanted him to decide which was right. He said: "Who made me a judge over you?"

Here is a specimen of such criticism as we are speaking of, though we believe a very small proportion of the laboring men of the country would endorse it:

"Did the Church in New York City advocate the cause of the locked-out workers in the cloak and suit industry during their fourteen weeks' struggle that has just come to an end? Here was a perfect opportunity. There was no question as to the justice of the cause of these workers. From the mayor down it was declared to be just by those who took the trouble to inform themselves about the matter. Did the Church in New York City advocate this just cause? No! Of course it did not! The Church in New York had nothing to say. The Church in New York was damnably dumb, as it has always been damnably dumb, and as it can always be counted upon to be damnably dumb whenever the interests of Mammon are at stake.

"Again, for a specific instance, in the great Garment Workers' strike in the metropolitan district in 1913, in which justice was clearly on the side of the workers, the Church in New York justified the saying of Keir Hardie in Carnegie Hall, that one can put little or no confidence in the language one hears used in church assemblies. The Church 'played safe,' as usual."

The business of the Church is not to spend its energies in any of these matters in which there may be honest differences of opinion. Its great work is one in which there can be no differences of opinion. It is to show to all men that they need a Saviour and that Jesus Christ is the Saviour they need.

We have very little sympathy with such movements in the Church Social Service Commissions or the Labor Departments. What the Church ought to do is to confine itself to its one great work of giving the pure gospel of salvation to all men, it matters not whether they are the men of the horny hand of toil, or whether they are clad in soft raiment. They

are all in need of salvation and the Church must carry it to them.

**TEAM WORK.**

The greatest ability today is the ability to work together. Team work is always effective work. The Central Empires of Europe have doubled their powers because they work in unison with one well-wrought out plan. The allies up to a year ago were fighting disunitedly. The best football team is the one that works in closest harmony. Skill counts more than weight.

It is true in Church work. The main reason of the slow progress of the Presbyterian Church has been its lack of team-play. With a constitution and jure divino form of Church government that recognizes this principle as most effective, it has been cursed with such a spirit of individualism that it has fallen behind in the progress of the ages.

It has carried the right of private judgment to such an extreme that it has nullified its own constitution. That man who said, "I am open to conviction, but I have never seen the man who could convince me," must have been a Presbyterian.

Perhaps this independency of action is due to the intensity of conviction that borders on stubbornness. A Church building was moved, and the congregation, but one determined member used to go to the site of the old church and sit under her umbrella from 11 A. M., on Sabbath days, till one o'clock. She had always worshipped God on that spot and would continue to do so. This reliable incident is illustrative of the spirit that has ruined Presbyterianism in many places.

We have confused immovability of doctrine with action of life. This failure to work together was disastrously seen in the older days of our Church in its executive agencies for advancing the kingdom of God.

We multiplied causes out of all proportion and then turned loose numerous secretaries with cries for "money." Confusion reigned as to the times and objects and relative importance of the benevolences, till conscientious pastors and sessions were in despair as well as darkness. The man with the loudest voice and the most adroit scheme got the bulk of the money and the interest of the Church.

When a few years later a few business men oppressed with this lack of team-work and hence failure to do our best, spoke of a committee to co-ordinate these affairs and clarify them by fixing relative amounts and specified times for the appeal, they were met with the cry, "House of Bishops," "Lording over God's heritage." But the General Assembly appointed such a committee and when they had brought order out of chaos, and put the players in their proper places and suggested keeping them there, such a hubbub arose that some of the men resigned in disgust.

But while the plan is made and the Assembly insists on it, the real difficulty is to keep the players on their part of the field. The center-fielder tries to run the pitcher out of the box, and the second-baseman is unwilling to let the third-baseman anywhere in the diamond. Occasionally an extra fine runner makes a hit, but is not supported by the other men and loses out at third because the batters that follow will strike out.

We have had some exhibitions of this in the last year that illustrate without any names attached.

Every pastor sees instances of this in his congregation, and sometimes seeks another field because the session or deacon's board or private members will not work together.